CLASS ACTION COMPLAINT

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Plaintiff GINI CHRISTENSEN, individually, and on behalf of all others similarly situated ("Plaintiff"), alleges upon knowledge with respect to herself and upon information and belief based, in part, on the investigation of counsel, as follows:

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

- 1. Plaintiff brings this action, individually and on behalf of all others similarly situated, against Defendants (as defined in ¶14, infra) alleging violations of 15 U.S.C. § 1693 et seq., commonly known as the Electronic Fund Transfer Act (the "Act"), and 12 C.F.R. § 205 et seq., commonly known as Regulation E ("Regulation E"), which contains regulations promulgated by the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System to implement the Act (the Act and Regulation E shall hereinafter be collectively referred to as the "EFTA").
- 2. The EFTA establishes the basic rights, liabilities, and responsibilities of consumers who use electronic fund transfer services and of financial institutions that offer these services. The primary objective of the EFTA and Regulation E is the protection of consumers engaging in electronic fund transfers. 12 C.F.R. § 205.1(b). The EFTA requires specific disclosures be given by operators of any automated teller machine ("ATM") to users of an ATM, prior to the imposition of a fee for using an ATM. 15 U.S.C. § 1693b.
 - The Congressional findings and declaration of purpose regarding the EFTA provides: 3.
 - (a) Rights and liabilities undefined

The Congress finds that the use of electronic systems to transfer funds provides the potential for substantial benefits to consumers. However, due to unique characteristics of such systems, the application of existing consumer protection legislation is unclear, leaving the rights and liabilities of consumers, financial institutions and intermediaries in electronic fund transfers undefined.

(b) Purposes

> It is the purpose of this subchapter to provide a basic framework establishing the rights, liabilities, and responsibilities of participants in electronic fund transfer systems. The primary objective of this subchapter, however, is the provision of individual consumer rights

4. The EFTA specifically requires that an ATM must have a posted notice attached on or at the machine informing consumers of the imposition of an ATM surcharge. 15 U.S.C. § 1693b(d)(3).

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- This case is brought under the EFTA based upon the fact that Defendants have imposed ATM fees on Plaintiff and other consumers without providing any posted notice as required by the EFTA.
- 6. Plaintiff, on behalf of herself and all others similarly situated, brings this class action against Defendants based on Defendants' violation of the EFTA. Plaintiff seeks, on behalf of herself and the proposed class, statutory damages, costs and attorney's fees, all of which are expressly made available by statute. 15 U.S.C. § 1693m. Plaintiff does not seek actual damages.

II. <u>JURISDICTION</u>

- 7. This Court has federal question jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1337 and 15 U.S.C. 1693m(g) because this action arises under the Electronic Fund Transfers Act, 15 U.S.C. § 1693 et seq.
- Venue in this judicial district is proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1391 in that this is the
 judicial district in which a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims
 occurred.

III. PARTIES

- 9. Plaintiff is a natural person who resides in Riverside County, California and used a certain ATM owned and operated by Defendants (as defined in ¶14, *infra*), which ATM is located at or about 1755 Hacienda Dr., Vista, California 92081 (the "Costco-Vista ATM"), within one year of the filing of this Complaint, and was charged an ATM surcharge fee by Defendants at the Costco-Vista ATM described in this Complaint.
- In addition to the Costco-Vista ATM, Defendants (as defined in ¶14, *infra*) also own and operate at least one (1) additional ATM, which ATM is located at 26610 Ynez Rd., Temecula, California 92591 (the "Costco-Temecula ATM"), and, within one year of the filing of this Complaint, charged ATM surcharge fees at the Costco-Temecula ATM as described in this Complaint, and did not have a posted fee notice on the Costco-Temecula ATM as alleged in this Complaint (collectively, the Costco-Vista ATM and the Costco-Temecula ATM are sometimes hereinafter referred to as the "Costco ATMs").

Defendant CARDTRONICS USA, INC. ("Cardtronics USA") is a Delaware

Defendant Cardtronics is a Delaware corporation doing business in California, with

The true names and capacities of defendants sued herein as Does 1 through 10,

corporation authorized and doing business in California, with its principal place of business located

at 3250 Briarpark Dr., Suite 400, Houston, Texas 77042. Cardtronics USA is a subsidiary of

defendant CARDTRONICS, INC. ("Cardtronics"). Cardtronics USA owns and/or operates the

its principal place of business located at 3250 Briarpark Dr., Suite 400, Houston, Texas 77042.

inclusive, are presently not known to Plaintiff, who therefore sues these defendants by such fictitious

names. Plaintiff will seek to amend this Complaint pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 15

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Costco ATMs.

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and include the Doe defendants' true names and capacities when they are ascertained. Each of the fictitiously named defendants is responsible in some manner for the conduct alleged herein and for the injuries suffered by Plaintiff and the proposed class as a result of defendants' wanton and illegal conduct.

14. Cardtronics USA, Cardtronics, and Does 1 through 10, inclusive, are collectively hereinafter referred to as "Defendants."

IV. BACKGROUND

A. Electronic Funds Transfer Act

Cardtronics owns and/or operates the Costco ATMs.

- 15. "Electronic funds transfer" is defined as "any transfer of funds . . . which is initiated through an electronic terminal, telephonic instrument, or computer or magnetic tape so as to order, instruct, or authorize a financial institution to debit or credit an account. Such term includes . . . automated teller machine transactions" 15 U.S.C. § 1693a(6); see also 12 C.F.R. § 205.3(b).
- 16. Defendants are an "automated teller machine operator" as that term is defined by 12 C.F.R. § 205.16(a), which states: "Automated teller machine operator means any person that operates an automated teller machine at which a consumer initiates an electronic fund transfer or a balance inquiry and that does not hold the account to or from which the transfer is made, or about which an inquiry is made."

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32. Defendants' non-compliance with the ATM fee notice requirements of the EFTA, and subsequent imposition of a fee on Plaintiff and the members of the proposed class, did not result from a bona fide error.

C. Plaintiff's Electronic Funds Transfers With Defendants

- 33. Plaintiff is a consumer as defined in 12 C.F.R. § 205.2(e).
- 34. In October 2010, Plaintiff used the Costco-Vista ATM described in this Complaint in order to conduct an electronic funds transfer involving the withdrawal of cash.
- 35. The Costco-Vista ATM did not and does not have the fee notice required by 15 U.S.C. § 1693b(d)(3) and 12 C.F.R. § 205.16, as it did not have any sign affixed to it or in close proximity to it informing consumers that use of the Costco-Vista ATM will or may result in an ATM surcharge.
- 36. Plaintiff was in fact assessed a \$1.25 ATM surcharge fee for withdrawing cash from the Costco-Vista ATM described in this Complaint.

V. CLASS ALLEGATIONS

- Plaintiff brings this class action on behalf of herself and all other similarly situated persons pursuant to Rule 23(a), (b)(1), (b)(3) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Plaintiff hereinafter sets forth facts and allegations more specifically in support of her class action allegations.
- 38. Plaintiff seeks to represent a class of similarly situated persons, consisting of (a) all consumers (b) who initiated an electronic funds transfer at the Costco ATMs described in ¶9 and 10, *supra*, and (c) were assessed a fee for withdrawing cash from the Costco ATMs described in ¶9 and 10, *supra*, (d) on or after the date one year prior to the filing of this action and continuing through the trial of this cause or until Defendants are compliant with the EFTA by posting the appropriate notice (the "Class").
- 39. Congress expressly intended that the EFTA would be enforced, in part, through private class actions. 15 U.S.C. § 1693m(a).
- 40. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges, that there are at minimum, hundreds of members of the Class.

- 41. The exact size of the Class and the identities of the individual members thereof are ascertainable through Defendants' records. Defendants have exclusive control of this information.
- 42. Members of the Class may be notified of the pendency of this action by techniques and forms commonly used in class actions, such as by published notice, e-mail notice, website notices, first class mail, or combinations thereof, or by other methods suitable to this Class and deemed necessary and/or appropriate by this Court.
- 43. Defendants can generate data for its Costco ATMs identifying each transaction in which a fee was charged. The data will include the date of the transaction, the amount of the fee and the personal account number ("PAN") for the consumer. The PAN includes a bank identification number ("BIN"). This information can be used to identify members of the Class.
- 44. The Class is sufficiently numerous to make bringing all parties before the Court impractical pursuant to Rule 23(a)(1) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
- 45. Plaintiff's claims are typical of the claims of the members of the Class. The claims of the Plaintiff and members of the Class are based on the same legal theories and arise from the same unlawful conduct. Plaintiff and Class members seek recovery of statutory, not actual, damages.
- 46. Plaintiff and members of the Class were each users of the Costco ATMs since the date one year prior to the filing of this action.
- 47. Plaintiff and each member of the Class were illegally charged an ATM fee as a result of Defendants' failure to comply with the ATM fee notice requirements of the EFTA, thereby resulting in common questions of law and fact pursuant to Rule 23(a)(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.
- 48. Plaintiff and each member of the Class received an inadequate notice regarding the imposition of an ATM fee by the Costco ATMs.
- 49. The questions of law and fact common to the Class predominate over questions which may affect individual members, including:
 - (a) Whether Defendants were at all relevant times during the class period automated teller machine operators which imposed a fee on consumers for providing host transfer services to those consumers;
 - (b) Whether Defendants are the operators of the Costco ATMs;

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- (c) Whether Defendants complied, at all times during the class period, with the notice requirements of 15 U.S.C. § 1693b(d)(3) and 12 C.F.R. § 205.16; and
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- (d) Whether Plaintiff and members of the Class are entitled to statutory damages, costs and attorney's fees for Defendants' acts and conduct.

Plaintiff can and will adequately and vigorously represent and protect the interests of

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the members of the Class. Plaintiff has no interests antagonistic to the members of the Class.

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Plaintiff has retained counsel able, competent and qualified to prosecute this class action litigation as set forth in Rule 23(a)(4) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

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 Plaintiff and Plaintiff's counsel will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the Class.

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In support of Plaintiff's allegations pursuant to Rule 23(b)(3) of the Federal Rules of 52. Civil Procedure, the Plaintiff avers that a class action is superior to other available means for the fair and efficient adjudication of the claims of the Class. While the aggregate damages that may be awarded to the members of the Class are likely to be substantial, the damages suffered by the individual members of the Class are relatively small. As a result, the expense and burden of individual litigation makes it economically infeasible and procedurally impracticable for each member of the Class to individually seek redress for the wrongs done to them. Plaintiff does not know of any other litigation concerning this controversy already commenced by or against any member of the Class. The likelihood of the individual members of the Class prosecuting separate claims is remote. Pursuant to Rule 23(b)(1)(A) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure individualized litigation would also present the potential for varying, inconsistent, or contradictory judgments, and would increase the delay and expense to all parties and the court system resulting from multiple trials of the same factual issues. In contrast, the conduct of this matter as a class action presents fewer management difficulties, conserves the resources of the parties and the court system, and would protect the rights of each member of the Class. Plaintiff knows of no difficulty to be encountered in the management of this action that would preclude its maintenance as a class action.

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1 VI. **CLAIMS** 2 COUNT I Against All Defendants for 3 Violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1693 et seg. and 12 C.F.R. 205 et seg. 53. Plaintiff incorporates by reference and realleges each and every allegation contained 4 5 above, as though fully set forth herein. Plaintiff asserts this claim on behalf of herself and the Class against Defendants. 54. 6 7 55. Defendants failed to provide notices to the Plaintiff and the Class as required by 15 U.S.C. § 1693b(d)(3) and 12 C.F.R. § 205.16(c), and imposed a fee in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 8 9 1693b(d)(3)(C) and 12 C.F.R. §§ 205.16(b) and (e). 10 56. 15 U.S.C. § 1693b(d)(3)(C), and its implementing regulation, 12 C.F.R. § 205.16(e), prohibit the imposition and receipt of a fee for conducting an electronic fund transfer unless a notice 11 of the fee is posted in a prominent and conspicuous location on or at the ATM. 12 Defendants imposed and received a fee in violation of 15 U.S.C. § 1693b(d)(3)(C), 13 57. and its implementing regulation, 12 C.F.R. § 205.16(e). 14 15 58 As a result of Defendants' violations of the EFTA, Defendants are liable to Plaintiff and the Class for statutory damages pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1693m. 16 As a result of Defendants' violations of the EFTA, Plaintiff and the members of the 17 59. Class are entitled to recover costs of suit and their reasonable attorney's fees. 18 19 REQUEST FOR RELIEF WHEREFORE, Plaintiff, on behalf of herself and the members of the Class, prays for: 20 21 A. An order certifying the Class and appointing Plaintiff as the representative of the 22 Class, and appointing undersigned counsel as Class Counsel; 23 B. An award to Plaintiff and the members of the Class of statutory damages pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1693m; 24 25 C. Payment of costs of suit herein incurred pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1693m(a)(3): Payment of reasonable attorney's fees pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1693m(a)(3); and 26 D. 27 111 28 111

E. For other and further relief as the Court may deem proper. 1 2 JURY TRIAL DEMANDED Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury. 3 DATED: February 3, 2011 5 MARK A. GOLOVACH 6 PACIFIC COAST LAW GROUP 7 501 W. Broadway, Suite 800 San Diego, California 92101 8 Telephone: 619/400-4895 Facsimile: 619/684-3601 9 10 TRAVIS, CALHOUN & CONLON, P.C. ERIC G. CALHOUN 11 1000 Providence Towers East 5001 Spring Valley Road Dallas, Texas 75244 12 Telephone: 972/934-4100 13 Facsimile: 972/934-4101 14 Attorneys for Plaintiff GINI CHRISTENSEN 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27

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APPLYING IFP

JUDGE

02/03/2011 FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

AMOUNT